

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 279638

FOL TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO ADDIS ABABA ALGIERS  
LIBREVILLE NUUAKCHOTT RABAT USUN NEW YORK FROM MADRID  
DTD 17 NOV 1977 QTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 09062

E.O. 11652 XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, SP, SS, AL

SUBJECT: SEIZURE OF SPANISH FISHERMEN OFF SAHARA:  
DEVELOPMENTS

REF: MADRID 8943

SUMMARY: WHILE THERE IS STILL NO CONFIRMATION THE  
POLISARIO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NOVEMBER 13 SEIZURE  
OF THREE SPANISH FISHERMEN OFF THE SAHARA COAST, A  
SPANISH SOCIALIST PARTY (PSOE) GROUP IN ALGIERS HAS  
BEGUN DISCUSSIONS WITH POLISARIO REPRESENTATIVES  
THERE, A MOVE NOT RPT NOT COORDINATED WITH THE  
SPANISH MFA. SPAIN HAS REQUESTED THE MEDIATION OF  
OAU PRESIDENT BONGO, WHILE CUBA HAS REPORTEDLY URGED  
THE CONVOCAION OF THE NON-ALIGNED COORDINATING  
COMMITTEE. THE SPANISH DESTROYER GRAVINA IS TO BE  
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REPLACED BY THE CORVETTE VILLA DE BILBAO OFF THE  
SAHARA. PRESS REPORTS PLACE TWO PATROL BOATS (FROM  
MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA) IN THE AREA ALSO. END SUMMARY.  
1. THE MADRID DAILY EL PAIS REPORTED FROM ALGIERS  
NOVEMBER 17 THAT PSOE DEPUTY MANUEL MARIN, IN ALGIERS  
AT THE HEAD OF A DELEGATION OF VARIOUS SPANISH LEFTISTS  
IN CONNECTION WITH THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE MADRID

ACCORDS, HAD "INITIATED NEGOTIATIONS" THERE WITH "HIGH REPRESENTATIVES" OF THE POLISARIO. MARIN WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THE EFFORT HAD BEEN STARTED NOVEMBER 15, IN A "FRATERNAL CLIMATE OF GOOD UNDERSTANDING", AND THAT "THE POLISARIO FRONT HAS GIVEN US INFORMATION ON THE INCIDENT AND HAS MADE CLEAR ITS DISPOSITION TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM SATISFACTORILY IN THE SHORTEST TIME". THE SAME REPORT, HOWEVER, QUOTED POLISARIO REPRESENTATIVES IN ALGIERS AS "INSISTING" THEY ARE STILL UNABLE TO CONFIRM OR DENY THE GROUP'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SEIZURE

2. IN MADRID, PSOE LEADER ALFONSO GUERRA CALLED THE PSOE'S POSITION "CLEAR: WE DEMAND THE IMMEDIATE FREEING" OF THE FISHERMEN. A PSOE OFFICIAL FOLLOWING THE MATTER TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE TALKS HAD BEEN ARRANGED WITH AN ASSIST FROM PSOE-POLISARIO CONTACTS IN MADRID, AND THAT ALTHOUGH THE POLISARIO HAD NOT YET CONFIRMED IT HAD THE "HOSTAGES", THE PSOE WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT THE TALKS, WHICH WERE CONTINUING NOVEMBER 17, WOULD BEAR FRUIT. GUERRA WAS QUOTED AS OPINING, HOWEVER, THAT THE POLISARIO "INTENDS TO FORCE THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT TO NEGOTIATE DIRECTLY, WITHOUT INTERMEDIARIES".

3. A KNOWLEDGEABLE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL TOLD EMBOFF THE MINISTRY HAD NOT KNOWN OF THE PSOE INITIATIVE BEFORE  
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THE EL PAIS STORY, AND WAS ATTEMPTING TO FIND OUT ABOUT IT. THE OFFICIAL, WHO PARTICIPATED IN SUCH NEGOTIATIONS IN THE PAST, SAID HE PERSONALLY WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO BE SPARED A TRIP TO ALGIERS AND "A MONTH" OF NEGOTIATIONS, BUT HE DOUBTED THE POLISARIO WOULD WANT TO LET GO OF THE HOSTAGES BEFORE EXTRACTING MAXIMUM VALUE FROM THEIR RETENTION. HE ALSO NOTED THAT NOT EVERYONE IN THE MINISTRY WAS AS RELAXED ABOUT THE PSOE INITIATIVE AS HE WAS, AND THAT SOME OFFICIALS WERE ANGRY.

4. THE SAME OFFICIAL OBSERVED THAT THE PSOE MIGHT BE ABLE TO EXERT PRESSURE ON THE GOA TOWARD AN EARLY RELEASE (WE NOTE THE PSOE IS IN THE FOREFRONT OF PRO-POLISARIO SPANISH SENTIMENT). IN THIS CONNECTION, THE SPANISH LEFTISTS IN ALGIERS WERE REPORTED BY EL PAIS TO BE WORRIED THAT THE SEIZURE WOULD INTERFERE WITH THEIR EFFORTS TO CHANGE SPANISH POLICY ON THE SAHARA.

5. WHILE THE FOREIGN MINISTRY TOLD THE PRESS HERE IT HAD SOUGHT THE MEDIATION OF OAU PRESIDENT BONGO, EL PAIS REPORTED FROM ALGIERS THAT OAU SECRETARY

GENERAL ETEKI HAD SENT A MESSAGE TO ALGERIAN FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTEFLIKA SUGGESTING MEDIATION BETWEEN RABAT AND ALGIERS. THE SAME CHRONICLE SAID THE ALGERIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD RECEIVED A MESSAGE FROM THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT SUGGESTING THE "URGENT CONVOCAION OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF THE NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES TO STUDY CONCRETE MEASURES OF SOLIDARITY WITH ALGERIA AND THE POLISARIO".

6. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS HERE, THE SPANISH DESTROYER GRAVINA IS TO BE REPLACED OFF THE SAHARA BY THE CORVETTE VILLA DE BILBAO, AND TWO PATROL BOATS (FROM MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA) ARE ALSO IN THE AREA. STABLER UNQTE HABIB  
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## Message Attributes

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